Christos Stavrakos and Dimitrios Liakos

New evidence regarding the early history of the Monastery of Vatopedi (Mt Athos): unpublished sigillographical material

Abstract: This paper deals with an unpublished lead seal was found during the excavation works within the chandler's workshop of Vatopedi, a later structure which was added to the eastern face of the bell tower (1427). The seal names a Constantine, chartoularios and epi tou patriarchikou sekretou and dates back to 10th till early 11th century. It is one of the rare direct sources regarding the very early period of the monastery, from which we have no other information, and serves to highlight the attention which the central ecclesiastical administration placed upon it already from the first years after its founding. It also shows the vibrant activities of its monks and their notable network of contacts with high-ranking political and ecclesiastical officials in the capital.

Adressen: Prof. Dr. Christos Stavrakos, University of Ioannina, Dept. of History and Archaeology, University Campus, 45110 Ioannina, Greece; chstavra@uoi.gr – Dr. Dimitrios Liakos, Ephorate of Antiquities of Chalkidiki and Mt Athos, Pl. Ippodromiou 7, 54621 Thessaloniki, Greece; liakos712003@yahoo.gr

Historical introduction

The monastery of Vatopedi, second in the monastic hierarchy of Mt. Athos, is located on the northeastern flank of the Athos peninsula,[1] and is dedicated to the

First, we would like to express our gratitude to the holy abbot Archimandrite Ephraim and the whole brotherhood for granting us permission to publish photographs of the monastery.

1 Here follows a selection of notable entries from the rich and varied bibliography on the monastery of Vatopedi: J. Bompaire / J. Lefort / V. Kravari / Ch. Giros (eds.), Actes de Vatopédi I. Paris 2001; J. Lefort / V. Kravari / Ch. Giros / K. Smyrlis (eds.), Actes de Vatopédi II. Paris 2006; J. Lefort / V. Kravari / Ch. Giros / K. Smyrlis / R. E. Gomez (eds.), Actes de Vatopédi III. Paris 2019; Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπεδίου. Παράδοση – Ιστορία – Τέχνη, vol. I, II. Mt Athos 1996; S. Mamaloukos, Το καθολικό της μονής Βατοπεδίου. Ιστορία και Αρχιτεκτονική. Athens 2001; Th. Pazaras, Τα βυζαντινά γλυπτά του καθολικού της μονής Βατοπεδίου. Thessaloniki

2001; I. Papangelos, Τα πήλινα αγιοπότηρα της Μονής Βατοπεδίου, in: Το Άγιον Όρος στον 15ο και 16ο αιώνα, Conference Proceedings. Thessaloniki 2012, 367 – 415; D. Liakos, Τα λιθανάγλυφα του Αγίου Όρους (PhD thesis), vol. I. Thessaloniki 2000 (sporadically); D. Liakos / I. Tablakes, Ο σταυρός ο λεγόμενος του Μεγάλου Κωνσταντίνου στη μονή Βατοπεδίου. *He Dekate* 2 (2005 – 2006) 65 – 75; D. Liakos, Παρατηρήσεις στα βυζαντινά δάπεδα σε τεχνική opus sectile στο Άγιον Όρος. *Byzantina* 31 (2011) 114 – 116; idem, Η δωροδοσία στις μονές του Αγίου Όρους τον 15ο και 16ο αιώνα. Το τεκμήριο της μεταλλοτεχνίας, in: Mt Athos in 15th and 16th c., Conference Proceedings. Thessaloniki 2012, 316 – 317, 322 – 323; idem, Λόγια πρόσωπα και λόγιο περιβάλλον στο Άγιον Όρος (14ος – 18ος αι.): η δυναμική τους στην τέχνη, in: Mt Athos and Scholarship. Conference Proceedings. Thessaloniki 2014, 255 – 256, 258 – 259; idem, The Byzantine bell-tower in Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos (1427). The sculpted decoration and its significance. *JÖB* 65 (2015) 153 – 168; idem, Unpublished Byzantine and post-Byzantine inscriptions on Mt Athos, in Ch. Stavrakos (ed.), Inscriptions in the Byzantine and post-Byzantine history and history of art. Wiesbaden 2016, 284 – 286, 290, 292, 294 – 296; Idem, Excavations on Mt Athos: shedding light on the building history of some Athonite foundations during the Byzantine and the early Ottoman period. Proceedings of the 23th International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Belgrade, 22 – 27 August 2016. Thematic Sessions of Free Communications, 916; Idem, Byzantine and post-Byzantine Athonite dedicatory inscriptions in historical and archaeological context, in E. Moutafov / J. Erdeljan (eds.), Texts/inscriptions/images – Art Readings 2016. Sofia 2017, 160 – 163, 165 – 166, 168 – 169, 177, 179 – 181; Idem, A unique 15th century donation to Vatopedi: a pair of wood-carved lecterns, in E. Moutafov / I. Toth (eds.), Byzantine and post-Byzantine art crossing borders – art readings 2017. Sofia 2017, 233 – 270; Idem, Παρατηρήσεις σε παναγιάρια της μονής Βατοπεδίου (14ος–16ος αι.). *DChAE* 39 (2018, in press); B. Miljković, The Serbian panagiarion from Vatopedi. *ZRVI* 49 (2012) 355 – 364; P. Theocharides, Ο δομημένος χώρος και η αρχιτεκτονική στο Άγιον Όρος την εποχή της Απελευθέρωσης (1912), in: Το Άγιον Όρος στα χρόνια της Απελευθέρωσης. Αφιέρωμα στην εκατονταετηρίδα της Απελευθέρωσης (2 – 15 November 2012). Thessaloniki 2012, 244 – 245; P. Sofragiou, The mural paintings from the exonarthex of Vatopedi monastery's katholikon. *European Journal of Sience and Theology* 8/4 (2012) 233 – 246; K. Weitzmann, The Psalter Vatopedi 761: its place in the Aristocratic Psalter recension. *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 10 (1947) 20 – 51. – Apart of this bibliography interesting references to the Monastery of Vatopedi can be found in: A.-M. Talbot, Searching for Women on Mt Athos: insights from the archives of the Holy Mountain. *Speculum* 87 (2012) 1000 – 1001, 1004 – 1006, 1008 – 1011; O. Strunk, The Byzantine office at Hagia Sophia. *DOP* 9 – 10 (1956) 179, 197, 199; A. Grabar, Quelques reliquaires de saint Démétrios et le martyrium du saint à Salonique. *DOP* 5 (1950) 9, 27 – 28; G. Miles, Byzantium and the Arabs: relations in Crete and the Aegean area. *DOP* 18 (1964) 9, footnote 41; K. Weitzmann, The old pictures of the aristocratic Psalter recension. *DOP* 30 (1976) 69 – 71, 76 – 79; N. Oikonomides, John VII Palaeologus and the ivory pyxis at Dumbarton Oaks. *DOP* 31 (1977) 335, footnote 45; Idem, Levels of literacy. *DOP* 42 (1988) 171; C. Giros, Présence Athonite à Thessalonique, XIIIe–XVe siècles. *DOP* 57 / Symposium on late Byzantine Thessalonike (2003) 266, 268 – 270, 278; I. Drpić, Art, hesychasm, and visual exegesis. Parisinus Graecus 1242 revisited. *DOP* 62 (2008) 220, footnote 24; F. Kondyli, Tracing monastic economic interests and their impact on the rural landscape of late Byzantine Lemnos. *DOP* 64 (2010) 134 – 137, 140 – 141, 143 – 146; M. Manoussacas, Six documents athonites tirés des archives de la Communauté Grecque de Venise. *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*

Annunciation of the Theotokos. It was founded after 972 and shortly before 985, as evidenced by a document from this year which mentions the name of its first known abbot, Nikolaos.[2]

The monastic tradition speaks of three aristocrats from Adrianople, Athanasios, Nikolaos and Antonios, who arrived on Mt. Athos in order to cloister and, following the encouragement of St. Athanasius the Athonite, settled in a ruined monastery, which they rebuilt.[3] This episode, however, is not mentioned in the Vitae A and B of St. Athanasios.[4] Regardless, the names mentioned in the tradition are also mentioned in written sources, albeit from differing time periods; all three were abbots of the monastery. In the first known mention of the monastery of Vatopedi, in a document from 985, Nikolaos is designated as abbot.[5] A few decades after Nikolaos, the energetic abbot Athanasios is mentioned in written sources (1020 – 1048).[6] The abbot Antonios is mentioned in documents of the next century, in particular of 1142.[7]

The monastery, at the time of its founding, was at the bottom of the Athonite hierarchy. In the Typikon of Constantine IX Monomachos (1045), it is located in the second position and is noteworthy for its large population of monks.[8] An impressive ascent is therefore evident from the late 10th to the mid-11th century, due

7 (1983, = Okeanos: Essays presented to Ihor Ševčenko on his sixtieth birthday by his colleagues and students) 431, 436, 438, 439, 441, 442; F. Hasluck, The first English traveller's account of Athos. *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 17 (190/1) 123 – 124; D. Kalpakes, Η γεωγραφία των αγιορειτικών μετοχίων κατά τη βυζαντινή εποχή (PhD). Ioannina 2020, I 174 – 180, 223 – 252, 336 – 339; II 89 – 138; III 49 – 92.

2 J. Lefort / N. Oikonomidès / D. Papachryssanthou (eds.), Actes d'Iviron I. Paris 1985, no. 7, 5, 63. 972 is considered a terminus post quem for the founding of the monastery, due to the absence of any mention of Nikolaos, or indeed of any other monk, as its abbot, in the Typikon of Tzimiskes of that year (known as *Tragos*).

3 S. Lampros, Τὰ Πάτρια τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὄρους. *NE* 9 (1912) 210 – 213; V. Barskij, Τα ταξίδια του στο Άγιον Όρος, 1725 – 1726, 1744 – 1745 (με τη φροντίδα και τα σχόλια του ακαδημαϊκού Παύλου Μυλωνά). Thessaloniki 2009, 390.

4 Vitae duae antiquae Sancti Athanasii Athonitae, ed. J. Noret. *CC*, 9. Turnhout 1982.

5 Actes d'Iviron I (as footnote 2 above) no. 7, lines 5, 63.

6 Ibid. no. 24 line 24; P. Lemerle / A. Guillou / N. Svoronos / D. Papachryssantou (eds.), Actes de Lavra I. Paris 1970, no. 24 line 46 and no. 29 line 23; P. Lamerle 7 G. Dagron / S. Ćirković (eds.), Actes de Saint-Panteléèmon. Paris 1982, no. 1 line 7, 24, no. 4, line. 41; J. Lefort (ed.) Actes d'Esphigménou. Paris 1973 no. 3 line 36; D. Papachryssanthou (ed.) Actes du Prôtaton. Paris 1975, no. 8, lines 50, 182, 186.

7 D. Papachrysanthou, Ο Αθωνικός μοναχισμός. Athens 1992, 236, 237.

8 Ph. Meyer, Die Haupturkunden für die Geschichte der Athosklöstern. Leipzig 1894, 157.

to the support of the imperial court, the aristocracy, lavish donations and tax exemptions.[9]

Information on the monastery in the 12th century is sparse, although it is known that at the end of that century the Serb rulers Symeon and Savvas Nemanja settled there, and developed significant construction activity. In the 14th century the monastery was gifted with significant donations, both in property and works of art, by the Emperor Ioannes VI Kantakouzenos.[10]

Vatopedi in the first half of the 15th c. was perhaps the only monastery to enjoy financial affluence due to the income from its dependencies and the donations of Serb aristocrats and officials and continued to preserve its lofty position within the Athonite hierarchy.[11]

Of the byzantine monastery, extant today are the *katholikon*, the chapel of the Sts Anargyroi, the bell-tower, segments of the enclosure etc.[12] Our knowledge of its byzantine phases is rounded out by information from literary sources[13], certain surviving inscriptions, detached or embedded in reuse,[14] marble architectural members,[15] information from engravings[16] and findings from excavations

9 N. Oikonomides, Βυζαντινό Βατοπαίδι: Μια μονή της υψηλής αριστοκρατίας, in: Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίου. Παράδοση – Ιστορία – Τέχνη, vol. I. Mount Athos 1996, 46, 47; recently N. Zarras, Νεώτερα στοιχεία από την έρευνα αθωνικών κτητορικών επιγραφών της Μεσοβυζαντινής περιόδου: οι περιπτώσεις των μονών Μεγίστης Λαύρας και Βατοπεδίου. Paper in the Ι′ Συνάντηση Ελλήνων Βυζαντινολόγων (University of Ioannina, 27.–30. 11. 2019).

10 Oikonomides, Βυζαντινό Βατοπαίδι 49. It has also been argued that the famous holy chalice made of jade (second half of the 14th c.), produced for the Despot of Mystras Manuel Kantakouzenos most likely arrived at Vatopedi on the initiative of his father, Ioannes VI Kantakouzenos (Liakos, Λόγια πρόσωπα, as footnote 1 above, 256, note 6), though its donation to the monastery by the final Despot of Thessalonika, Andronikos Palaiologos, during his brief stay in Mystras is just as likely (Liakos, Unique donation 250, ass footnote 1 above, note 76).

11 Oikonomides, Βυζαντινό Βατοπαίδι (as footnote 9 above) 49 – 53; R. Radić, Η μονή Βατοπεδίου και η Σερβία στον ΙΕ΄ αιώνα, in: Ιερά Μονή Βατοπεδίου. Ιστορία και Τέχνη. *Athonika Symmeikta* 7 (1999) 87 – 96.

12 For the enclosure complex and the byzantine structures, see P. Theocharides, Το συγκρότημα του περιβόλου, in: Ιερά Μεγίστη Μονή Βατοπαιδίου, Παράδοση – Ιστορία – Τέχνη, Α′. Mount Athos 1996, 148 – 157.

13 The old chapels of the monastery are enumerated in the unpublished codex 690, 77v, 78r, 78v (16th c).

14 Theocharides, Συγκρότημα (as footnote 12 above) 155, 156 (fig. 121); Pazaras, Βυζαντινά γλυπτά (as footnote 1 above) 55 – 57; Mamaloukos, Καθολικό (as footnote 1 above) 266 – 267; Liakos, Unpublished inscriptions (as footnote 1 above) 285 – 286; Idem, Dedicatory inscriptions (as footnote 1 above) 160, 162.

15 Pazaras, Βυζαντινά γλυπτά (as footnote 1 above) 49, 51 (fig. 61, 62). Liakos, Byzantine bell-tower (as footnote 1 above) 159 – 160.

16 Theocharides, Συγκρότημα 150.

within the enclosure of the monastery. Certain structural remnants have been dated to the middle byzantine period and are therefore important evidence for the early history of the monastery.[17]



1. Vatopedi monastery. The bell-tower (1427).

17 The Ephorate of Antiquities of Chalkidiki and Mt Athos / Ministry of Culture and Sports/ Greece (former 10th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities) carried out excavation works in the monastery and in particular around the *katholikon* (I. Papangelos / L. Plataniotis, Η υπό το καθολικό της μονής Βατοπεδίου βασιλική, in M. Korres / S. Mamaloukos / K. Zampas / F. Mallouchou-Tufano, ed., Ήρως κτίστης. Μνήμη Χαράλαμπου Μπούρα, vol. II. Athens 2018, 363 – 370), in the narthex of the chapel of St. Nikolaos (Papangelos, Πήλινα αγιοπότηρα, as footnote 1 above, 367, 369), in the south wing, in the chandler's workshop, in the area surrounding the bell tower and the larder, outside of the south enclosure and in two dependencies: The Athoniada School and the Skete of St. Demetrios inside the *Kyriakon* (see brief reference in Liakos, Παρατηρήσεις, as footnote 1 above, 118, footnote 59) and its surrounding area. D. Liakos, supervisor of the excavation of the bell tower, chandler's workshop, south wing, Athoniada School and Skete of St. Demetrios, is preparing them for publication. For a preliminary presentation, see D. Liakos, Παλαιά και νέα ευρήματα από τις ανασκαφικές έρευνες στις αγιορειτικές μονές Βατοπαιδίου, Φιλοθέου και Αγίου Παύλου, in: 28η Συνάντηση για το Αρχαιολογικό έργο στη Μακεδονία και στη Θράκη. Thessaloniki 2015; also Liakos, Excavations (as footnote 1 above) 916 – 917.



2. Vatopedi monastery. The chandler's workshop (exterior).

Excavations data

Within the frame of restoration works carried out on the byzantine bell tower[18] (**fig. 1**), excavations were made in the interior of the chandler's workshop[19] (**fig. 2**), a later structure which was added to the eastern face of the bell tower. The lead seal was found within the chandler's workshop (**fig. 3**), together with sparse post-byzantine ceramic decoration, at a relatively shallow layer, at a depth of 30 cm from the threshold of the entrance to the workshop.

The sigillographical finding

The lead seal (**fig. 4**) is in very good condition of preservation and presents no difficulty in the identification and reading of its legend (diam. 1, 01 cm).

The form which the letters take infers a dating of the lead seal to end of the 10th c. till early 11th c.

18 The restoration work on the bell tower was carried out between the years 2005 – 2008 by the Ephorate of Antiquities of Chalkidiki and Mt. Athos within the 3rd European Union Support Framework.

19 Liakos, Excavations (as footnote 1 above) 916.



3. Vatopedi monastery. The chandler's workshop (interior). The excavation.



4. Vatopedi monastery. The lead seal found in the ecxavation.

Obverse

On the obverse it bears the depiction of a patriarchal cross on two steps. The floral decoration is in such a good state of preservation as to allow us to identify it as a grapevine. Two bushels of grapes are easily discernable below the horizontal cross-arm and on either side of its vertical arm. An element of interest is the fact that the artist depicted the fruit not as it appears in nature, hanging from the branches of the vine, but rather in reverse: the fruit are aligned from bottom to top[20].

20 See similar depictions in metallic objects, such as for example on the reverse of the icon of the Archangel Michael in St. Mark's Basilica in Venice (10th – 11th c.), Il Tesoro di San Marco. Milano 1986, 151, but also of sculpture, such as the central aisle of the church of St. Polyeuk-

The circular inscription is also very well preserved:

+ΚЄΡΟΗΘ̣…ωCω̣Δ̣Λ̣
+ Κ(ύρι)ε βοήθ[ει τ]ῷ σῷ δ(ού)λ(ῳ)

Reverse

+ΚωΝ	+ Κων-
.ΤΑΝ̂ΧΑΡ	[σ]ταν(τίνου) χαρ-
.ȣΛSЄΠΙΤ	[τ]ουλ(αρίῳ) (καὶ) ἐπὶ τ(οῦ)
Π̄ΡΙΑΡΧ̣	π(ατ)ριαρχ(ικοῦ)
CЄΚΡ	σεκρ(έτου)

Konstantinos of our lead seal is not known from other sources. However, Athonite lead seals and documents from the same time period reference another Konstantinos without a family name. Scholars identify this man with Κωνσταντῖνος Καράμαλλος,[21] who, in the second half of the 10th c., travelled under orders from the imperial court to Hierissos in order to solve a quarrel between the residents of Hierissos and the Monastery of Kolobou.[22]

The *χαρτουλάριοι* were byzantine bureaucrats of various offices, both state and ecclesiastical. In the many state offices (*σεκρέτα)* the *χαρτουλάριοι* together with the *νοτάριοι* and *καγκελλάριοι* (or *πρωτοκαγκελλάριοι*) composed the myriad state documents and were responsible for the keeping of archives.[23] According to byzantine law the first ecclesiastical *χαρτουλάριοι* appeared in the 6th century. The *χαρτουλάριοι τῆς Μεγάλης Ἐκκλησίας*, were appointed by a public document of the Patriarch and the *οἰκονόμος*. Their duties were for the most part economic and they were paid a percentage (from 1% to 2%) from the contracts signed between the *Μεγάλη Ἐκκλησία* and private individuals. The information available to

---

tos: M. Harrison, A temple for Byzantium. The discovery and excavation of Anicia Juliana's palace church in Istanbul. London 1989, 82 (fig. 89).

21 PmbZ # 23918.

22 See G. Soulis, On the Slavic settlemet in Hierissos in the tenth century. *Byzantion* 23 (1953) 67 – 68; H. Saradi, On the “archontike” and “ekklesiastike dynasteia” and “prostasia” in Byzantium with particular attention to the legal sources: a study in social history of Byzantium. *Byzantion* 64 (1994) 115.

23 N. Oikonomidès, Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles. Paris 1972, 309 – 310, 364; in the 10th century καγκελλάριοι assisted the ἔπαρχος τῆς Πόλεως in his judicial duties, see A. Gkoutzioukostas, Η απονομή δικαιοσύνης στο Βυζάντιο (9ος – 12ος αιώνες) Τα κοσμικά και δικαιοδοτικά όργανα και δικαστήρια της πρωτεύουσας. Thessaloniki 2004, 105 – 106.

us regarding the *χαρτουλάριοι* from the period until the late 11th century does not permit the formation of a clear impression of their duties.[24]

V. Leontaritou[25] considers the lead seal of a certain *Νικόλαος κληρικὸς καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ σεκρέτου* from the Vatican to be the oldest testimony of the office of *ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ πατριαρχικοῦ σεκρέτου*. This seal was dated by V. Laurent to the 10th and 11th c.[26] However, it has been dated based mainly on stylistic criteria to the first half of the 11th c. It is also worth noting that the office of this particular lead seal refers simply to an *ἐπὶ τοῦ σεκρέτου* without the adjective *πατριαρχικοῦ*. Laurent suggested two hypotheses for the explanation of the absence of the adjective *πατριαρχικός:*

– The producer of the boulloterion possibly forgot to engrave the adjective *πατριαρχικός*,

– The same user of the boulloterion used it for the sealing of documents destined for the narrow community of the church, therefore making unnecessary the adjective *πατριαρχικός*. This fact, due to the differentiation between the civil and ecclesiastical office of *ὁ ἐπὶ τοῦ σεκρέτου*[27] in the particular case of Nikolaos was more than obvious within the circle of recipients of his documents.

As a result of this new dating, the lead bulla which was discovered in the Vatopedi Monastery is the oldest testimony of the office of *ἐπὶ τοῦ πατριαρχικοῦ σεκρέτου*. Also from the 11th century is the lead seal of a certain Basileios Leukatenos *χαρτουλάριος γηροκόμος καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ πατριαρχικοῦ σεκρέτου*[28] and a Michael *βασιλικὸς κληρικὸς ἐπὶ τοῦ πατριαρχικοῦ σεκρέτου* (probably date in the mid-11th century).[29] The lead seal of a Constantine Maroules *κουβουκλήσιος καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ πατριαρχικοῦ σεκρέτου* is dated to between the 11th and 12th centuries.[30]

---

24 V. Leontaritou, Εκκλησιαστικά αξιώματα και υπηρεσίες στην πρώιμη και μέση βυζαντινή περίοδο. Athens / Komotini 1996, 615 – 620, with older bibliography.

25 Ibid. 525.

26 V. Laurent, Le Corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin. V: L'église, partie 1. Paris 1963, no. 133. A parallel piece from the Orphanides-Nikolaïdes collection was published by I. Koltsida-Makre (I. Koltsida-Makre, Βυζαντινά μολυβδόβουλλα συλλογής Ορφανίδη/Νικολαΐδη Νομισματικού Μουσείου Αθηνών. Athens 1996, no. 154; see also W. Seibt / A.-K. Wassiliou, Rezension in: *BZ* 91 [1998] 147). A similar lead seal (not of the same Nikolaos) dated with certainty to the decade of 970 was found in Silistra, Bulgaria. On the obverse it bears a bust of St. Nikolaos blessing (right hand) and holding the Evangelium (left hand) and names a certain *Νικόλαος μητροπολίτης Ἀδριανουπόλεως* (I. Jordanov, Corpus of Byzantine Seals from Bulgaria. Vol. I.: Byzantine Seals with Geographical Names. Sofia 2003, 3.4; see also Laurent, ibid. no. 717).

27 Oikonomidès, Listes (as footnote 24 above) 309, footnote 120, 121; 391.

28 Laurent, ibid. no.134.

29 Ibid. no. 132.

30 Ibid. no.135.

Two other sphragistical types which name a certain *Νικηφόρος κληρικὸς τῆς Μεγάλης Ἐκκλησίας καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ σεκρέτου*[31] are dated to the same period as the previous one.

The duties of the *ἐπὶ τοῦ πατριαρχικοῦ σεκρέτου* are not sufficiently clear. V. Leontaritou rightly believes that they must have had duties concerning the legal process.[32] She bases this on events described in a document from 1049 (August 14th). A certain Constantine *κληρικὸς τῆς Μεγάλης Ἐκκλησίας, κουβουκλήσιος, ἀρχιητρὸς καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ πατριαρχικοῦ σεκρέτου* undertook, as an envoy of the patriarch Michael Keroullarios (1043 – 1058) the reconciliation of differences in land ownership between the monasteries of Stylou on Mt. Latros and Christ the Saviour of Agraula.[33]

The seal under examination is the only one discovered within the Vatopedi Monastery. However, we know of certain other seals which are connected to the monastery or its officials.

The lead seal connected to the Vatopedi Monastery is from the G. Zacos collection.[34] On the obverse there is a depiction of the Theotokos Hodegetria,[35] and on the reverse the legend in four verses: *Ἀθανασίῳ μοναχῷ τοῦ Βατοπεδίου*. The publication of the seal does not include a dating. After close examination of a recent photograph of this piece we have dated it to the period between the 2nd half of the 11th century and the early 12th century.[36] Based on this photograph, we believe it is likely the Christian name of the owner is Athanasios.

From the immediately earlier period we are aware of an Athanasios, who was abbot of the Vatopedi Monastery and one of its founders.[37] Athanasios, as abbot

---

31 Ibid. no. 1132; parallel to it: K. Konstantopoulos, Βυζαντιακὰ μολυβδόβουλλα τοῦ ἐν Ἀθήναις Ἐθνικοῦ Νομισματικοῦ Μουσείου. Athens 1917, no. 27. The second sigillographical type: Koltsida-Makre, Βυζαντινά μολυβδόβουλλα (as footnote 27 above) 267. For the correct reading: W. Seibt / A.-K. Wassiliou, Rezension in *BZ* 91 (1998) 148.

32 Leontaritou, Εκκλησιαστικά αξιώματα (as footnote 26 above) 525 – 526.

33 F. Miklosich / I. Müller, Acta et diplomata monasteriorum et ecclesiarum Orientis, IV. Vienna 1871, 315 – 317; V. Grumel, Les regestes des actes du patriarchat de Constantinople, I. Les actes des patriarches II–III, Les regestes de 715 à 1206, 2nd ed. J. Darrouzès. Paris 1989, no. 857.

34 G. Zacos, Byzantine lead Seals, II, ed. J. Nesbitt. Bern 1984, 366.

35 W. Seibt, Die Darstellung der Theotokos auf byzantinischen Bleisiegeln, besonders im 11. Jahrhundert. *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* 1 (1987) 47: the iconographical type of Hodegetria and that of the Dexiokratousa occur on seals from the late 9th until the 12th c.

36 We would like to extend our gratitude to Prof. Dr. Jean-Claude Cheynet for making available a newer, better-quality photograph.

37 *PmbZ* # 20690.

of the Vatopedi Monastery, is referred to in documents from December of 1020 up to May of 1048. It is quite likely that he died sometime in the mid-11th century. The year 1048 is the *terminus post quem* of his death.[38]



5. Lead seal of Theotokos of Vatopedi (Collection of the Fogg Art Museum).

Another lead seal[39] from the collection of the Fogg Art Museum[40] is also connected with the Monastery of Vatopedi. It is dated to the 2nd half of the 11th – early 12th centuries (**fig. 5**).[41] On its obverse it bears a bust of the Theotokos of the iconographical type of the Dexiokratousa.[42] To the right of the Theotokos, the only extant segment of the inscription is:
M̄ Θ̄

38 Th. Pazaras, Ο τάφος των κτητόρων στο καθολικό της Μονής Βατοπεδίου. *Byzantina* 17 (1994) 421, 425; *PmbZ* # 20690.

39 Christos Stavrakos had the possibility to see closer this lead seal during his summer fellowship at Dumbarton Oaks (2014) and he expresses his deepest thanks to Dumbarton Oaks for the permission of the publication of the piece.

40 Now Cambridge, Massachusetts, Arthur M. Sackler Museum BZS 1951.31.5.697.

41 V. Laurent, Le Corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin, V. L'église, partie 2. Paris 1965, no. 1224. Laurent dates the seal to between the 10th and 11th centuries; J. Nesbitt / N. Oikonomides, Catalogue of the Byzantine seals at Dumbarton Oaks and in the Fogg Museum of Art. I. Washington D. C. 1991, 28.7.7 (a general dating into the 11th century is proposed); A.-K. Wassiliou-Seibt, Corpus der byzantinischen Siegel mit metrischen Legenden. Siegellegenden von Ny bis inclusive Σφραγίς, II. *WBS*, 28/2. Vienna 2016, no. 2925. We have adopted the dating of the most recent publication.

42 See Seibt, Darstellung (as footnote 36 above): the iconographic type of Theotokos Dexiokratousa occurs on seals from the late 9th up to the 12th c.

Reverse

+CΦPA	+ Σφρα-
ΓΙCTHC	γὶς τῆς
Θ̄K̄OVTꙊ	Θ(εοτό)κου τοῦ
RATOΠЄ	Βατοπε-
ΔΙΟV	δίου

The legend of the seal, despite containing 13 syllables with *caesura* after the seventh syllable and paroxytony at the end, and attempts to copy the dodecasyllabic verse:[43]

+ Σφραγὶς τῆς Θεοτόκου τοῦ Βατοπεδίου

On seals dated with certainty between the years 1626 and 1639 (on the obverse depiction of the Mother of God with Jesus Christ in the iconographical type of the *Hogegetria* or the *Annunciation*) the Theotokos is named either *ἡ Θεοτόκος κυρία Βατοπεδίου* or *ἡ πανύμνητος Παρθένος ἡ Βατοπεδινή*.[44]

The historical and cultural context

Excavations beneath the *arcosolium* of the *mesonyktikon* (*esonarthex*) of the *katholikon* brought to light two consecutive burials containing a total of three bodies. One of the deceased, who was found in the undisturbed layer at the lowest level of the grave, cannot be identified[45]. The remaining two, however, who were found within a larnax, are according the excavators quite likely the abbots Nikolaos[46] and Athanasios, known as the founders of the Monastery of Vatopedi. The identification at least of one of the deceased is further confirmed by an inscribed lead tablet, which was found within the larnax with the bones. The inscription combines maledictions to befall any who attempt to defile the grave with a reference to the name of Athanasios *ἡγούμενος τοῦ Βατοπεδίου*.[47]

---

43 H. Hunger, Zur Metrik byzantinischer Siegellegenden. *Studies in Byzantine Sigillography* 2 (1990) 29.

44 V. Tchentsova, A corpus of post-Byzantine seals: research cataloguing project, in H. Ivakin / N. Khrapunov / W. Seibt (eds), Byzantine and Rus' Seals. Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Rus'-Byzantine Sigillography (Kyiv, Ukraine, 13–16 September 2013). Kiev 2015, 264–267.

45 Pazaras, Τάφος (as footnote 39 above) 413.

46 PmbZ 26036: He is referenced in documents from January of 985 to July of 1012.

47 Pazaras, Τάφος (as footnote 39 above) 412, footnote 23; *PmbZ* # 422.

The reasons for which the lead seal came to the Monastery are two: it is either for the personal correspondence of *Konstantinos* with the monastery or is connected with his duties as *χαρτουλάριος καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ πατριαρχικοῦ σεκρέτου*.

If the first hypothesis is correct then the lead seal is an important piece of evidence for the early history of the monastery. We can therefore assume in this case that the prestige of the monastery was so great as to create a network of personal correspondences with the Patriarchate of Constantinople. It is also likely that it had among its cloistered population important figures which kept in contact through written correspondence with high-ranking officials of the Patriarchate.

If the second of the two hypotheses is true, then the discovery of a lead seal of Constantine *χαρτουλάριος καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ πατριαρχικοῦ σεκρέτου* in the Vatopedi Monastery can be connected, if we consider what little information we have regarding the duties of these officials, with particular activities. As *χαρτουλάριος* Constantine perhaps presided over financial contracts or other financial actions between the Vatopedi Monastery and the Patriarchate of Constantinople. As *ἐπὶ τοῦ πατριαρχικοῦ σεκρέτου* he quite possibly mediated differences which occurred between the Vatopedi monastery and other monasteries.

However, from the period to which the lead seal presented here is dated, there is no reference to a Konstantinos involved in any dispute regarding property between Vatopedi and other monasteries, which would have offered an explanation for the presence of the seal of an official such as Konstantinos *χαρτουλάριος καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ πατριαρχικοῦ σεκρέτου*.

But the monastery during this time period was indeed involved in disputes regarding property with other monasteries. These disputes usually lasted for many years and could not be solved by the intervention of a single official or the composition of a single document.

A document of the Vatopedi Monastery (dated 26th of December 1001)[48] informs us that there was a long-standing dispute between the abbot of the monastery of Philadelphos, Joseph,[49] and the Vatopedi Monastery. The origin of this dispute was the founding of a *metochion* of the Philadelphos Monastery on property owned by Vatopedi close to the Monastery of Esphigmenou. The monks of the Philadelphos Monastery had already from 998[50] addressed the Emperor Basileios II in order to request his mediation for the solution to the problem. For this reason, Nikephoros Ouranos[51] sent a monk named Theophylaktos,[52] to nego-

48 Bompaire/Lefort/ Kravari/Giros, Actes de Vatopédi I (as footnote 1 above) 71.
49 *PmbZ* # 23532.
50 Bompaire/Lefort/ Kravari/Giros, Actes de Vatopédi I (as footnote 1 above) I 73.
51 *PmbZ* # 25617.

tiate a solution. Following this intervention Nikephoros, *πρῶτος* of Mt. Athos, in September of 998, travelled to the disputed property with the express purpose of enforcing the decision of the envoy of Nikephoros Ouranos. He therefore composed an *ὑπόμνημα* for the solution to this dispute.[53] We can thus assume from this information that the problem between the two monasteries was extant already a few years before 998.

The revision of the decision of Theophylaktos requested by Joseph, the abbot of the Philadelphos Monastery, was unsuccessful and thus in December of 1001 he sold the disputed property to the Vatopedi Monastery for 149 nomismata.[54]

According to this information, the dispute lasted for at least three years. We could consequently assume that it existed before 998, the date of the first document. According to this hypothesis the lead seal could be connected with the composition of a document regarding the solution of this particular problem between the two monasteries, in a period before 998 or 1001. But in any case we cannot exclude the possibility of its connection with another, unknown as of yet, dispute.

Whatever the answer to this question might be, the importance of the finding cannot be overstated, because the lead seal is yet another direct source regarding the very early period of the monastery, from which we have no other information, and serves to highlight the attention which the central ecclesiastical administration placed upon it already from the first years after its founding. It also shows the vibrant activities of its monks and their notable network of contacts with high-ranking political and ecclesiastical officials in the capital.

---

52 *PmbZ* # 28230.

53 Bompaire/Lefort/ Kravari/Giros, Actes de Vatopédi I (as footnote 1 above) no. 2, 67 – 70.

54 Ibid. no. 3, 75, 29 – 31.